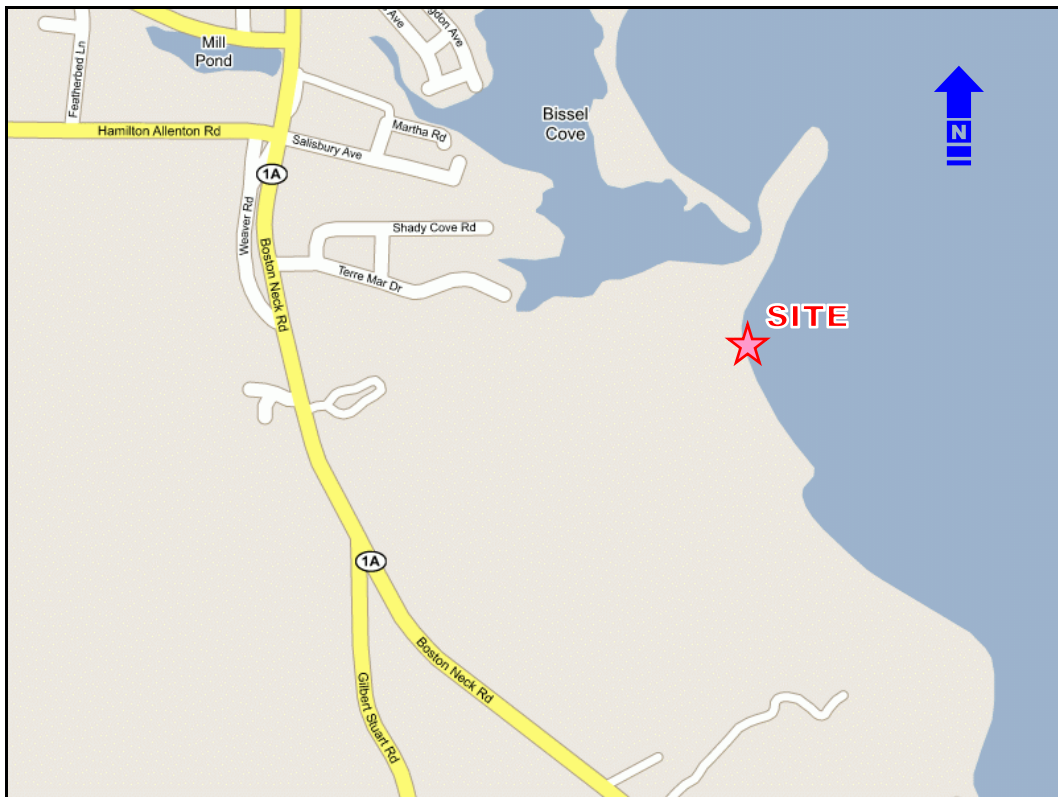


Site No. 18

## ROME POINT

North Kingstown  
Boston Neck Road (Route 1A)



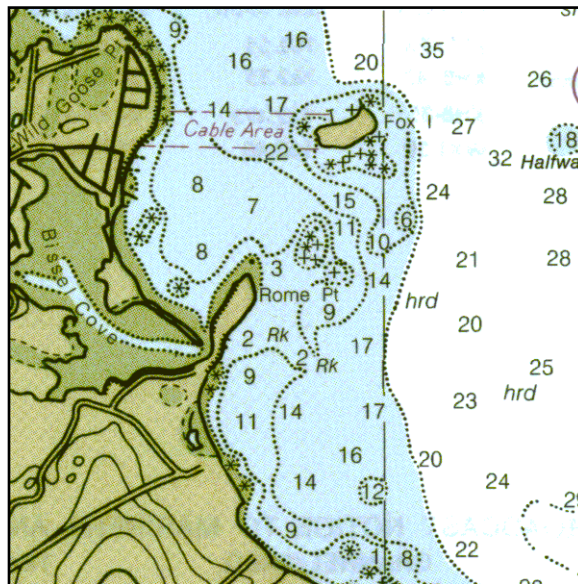
## ROME POINT

### Site Description

Rome Point is a small peninsula located within the John H. Chafee Nature Preserve, a 230-acre state-owned conservation area along the West Passage shoreline in North Kingstown. As one of the few remaining undeveloped stretches of shoreline along Narragansett Bay, this site offers outstanding natural character and is renowned for the harbor seal population which seasonally inhabits the emergent rocks east of Rome Point. A recently-constructed gravel parking area along Boston Neck Road (Route 1A) supports public use of the preserve, and the shoreline at this location is accessed by a long wooded path (approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile).

### Location Assessment

**Bay Location.** Rome Point is located within the West Passage, approximately 1 mile north of the Jamestown-Verrazano Bridge. These waters are popular for recreational boating and sailing, though both were observed to occur well removed from the shoreline given the shallow depths and emergent rocks along this coast. The cobble beach may be used for light swimming and beach-going activities (see Photo 5), though its distance from the parking area and the lack of facilities generally inhibit such use. As the seasonal population of harbor seals in Narragansett Bay has increased significantly over the past few decades, the rocks along Rome Point have become the most popular haul-out location for these marine mammals (typically October through April). Signs posted along the walking paths near the point urge visitors not to approach or otherwise disturb the seals.



Through the Online Recreational Fishing Survey, most all recreational species of interest were reported present within the West Passage region which includes the subject site. Stripped Bass, Bluefish, Summer Flounder and Scup were most often reported (spring - fall), with Tautog, Weakfish, Black Sea Bass, and Winter flounder also indicated. Waters in the vicinity of this site are open to shellfishing and were assessed as fully meeting aquatic life support criteria. These waters have been designated water quality goal of SA (high quality) by the RIDEM (see Appendix B).

**Land Location.** Rome Point is located within the John H. Chafee Nature Preserve, a large tract of land that was donated to the State in 2001 by the Narragansett Electric Company. Designated for open space preservation, this conservation area has deed restrictions which prohibit development on its lands. Several walking paths run through the heavily-wooded preserve, offering public access to hiking, mountain biking, and other outdoor recreation activities. Though not managed as a camping area, it appears that the grounds are sometimes used for camping (as evident by several small fire pits near Rome Point). Narragansett Electric utility lines (and easement) run parallel to the main path leading to the shoreline for most of its length. Several small freshwater wetland areas also flank this path.

Boston Neck Road (Route 1A) is a 2-lane principal arterial roadway, along which land use is primarily low-density residential. This roadway is easily accessed from the Route 138 freeway to the south, and Wickford Village (the town center of North Kingstown) is approximately 2 miles to the north. Located across the Route 1A parking lot along Gilbert Stuart Road, the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace Museum is popular historical attraction.

*Environmental Constraints and Permitting.* Waters along this undisturbed stretch of shoreline are designated by the CRMC as Type 2 (Low-Intensity Use), and the coastal feature of the site is the cobble beach (see Photos 5, 7, 8). Eel grass is not documented in these waters nor was it observed upon site visit.

### Facilities Assessment

The Rome Point / Chafee Nature Preserve site is characterized by its exceptional natural character and scenic value. A sign posted at the main path entrance along Route 1A notes the area's "take in / take out" trash policy, and the entire site was observed to be virtually devoid of litter. While no fishing was observed at the time of visit, it appears that the entire shoreline of the nature preserve (including Rome Point) may be used for recreational angling. None of the spots along this coast appear to offer significantly better access to deeper waters (see nautical chart image), though these shallow waters may be conducive to surf fishing with waders. Given the unsurfaced natural footpath (Photo 3) and the relatively long walking distance from Route 1A, current fishing use of the site is likely limited to dedicated, able-bodied anglers.

Access to this shoreline location (and the nature preserve in general) is supported by a small gravel parking lot immediately north of the main path from route 1A (Photos 1, 2). Developed by the RIDEM and completed in the fall of 2005, this parking area provides space for 29 vehicles (including 2 handicap-designated spaces). The recently-completed lot improves both the capacity and safety of public access to the nature preserve, as visitors were previously required to park along the shoulder of Route 1A.

### **Existing Site Conditions**

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
<i>Existing Fishing Facilities</i>		X		
<i>Parking</i>			X	
<i>Compatibility with Surrounding Land / Water Uses</i>			X	
<i>Statewide Transportation Accessibility / Public Transit</i>			X	
<i>Site Aesthetics</i>				X
	Low	Medium	High	
<i>Water Quality (see Appendix B)</i>			X	

Priority for Capital Improvements: **Low**

Given its location well within the John H. Chafee Nature Preserve, the development of capital improvements for recreational fishing use at Rome Point appears neither prudent nor feasible. It is highly unlikely that the deed restrictions associated with this conservation area would permit the type and extent of development (e.g., new access roadway, fishing structure) that would appreciably improve public accessibility to and enjoyment of fishing at this location. Its remoteness from the existing roadway, the outstanding natural character of the cobble beach, and the close proximity of established harbor seal habitat further render this location unsuitable for development. As the sole area that could be readily improved upon at the site, parking has been effectively addressed through construction of the new gravel lot along Boston Neck Road.





**Photo 1.** Path entrance along the easterly side of Boston Neck Road.



**Photo 2.** Parking area for John H. Chafee Nature Preserve under construction. This lot has been completed and is open for public use.





**Photo 3.** Typical footpath section looking east.



**Photo 4.** Looking east at path clearing leading to the West Passage shoreline.



**Photo 5.** Looking north along West Passage shoreline.



**Photo 6.** Looking northeast to Rome Point proper from the shoreline.





**Photo 7.** Looking north from Rome Point proper. Fox Island is visible on the right.



**Photo 8.** Looking southwest along shoreline from Rome Point proper.